Plan to cleanse all major riven

1845. SHRI T.T.V. DHINAKARAN: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether any action plan has been taken to cleanse all major rivers;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI NAMO NARAIN MEENA): (a) to (c) Yes Sir. The First River Action Plan i.e. the Ganga Action Plan was taken up by the Ministry of Environment and Forests in 1985. Since then its scope has increased to cover all the major rivers of the country in stages and the programme was renamed as National River Conservation Plan (NRCP) in 1995. At present the Centrally Sponsored Scheme of NRCP covers 164 towns along polluted stretches of 35 identified rivers spread over 20 States in the country at an approved cost of Rs. 4793 crore. The major rivers covered under the Plan include Ganga, Yamuna Gomti, Damodar and Mahananda besides the rivers Satluj, Krishna, Cauveri and Godavari.

The pollution abatement works undertaken under NRCP include interception and diversion works to capture the raw sewage flowing into the rivers for treatment, installation of Sewage Treatment Plants, creation of low cost sanitation facilthes. Electric/improved wood crematoria. River Front Development etc.

Slaughter houses

1846. SHRI KAMAL AKHTAR: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that unregistered and illegally operating slaughter houses for outnumber the legal ones in India;

(b) whether it is a fact that only 71 of the 461 slaughter houses in 10 States and Union Territories are certified by the concerned State Pollution Control Boards as being equipped with necessary hygienic and anti-pollution mechanism to provide hygienic meat; and

(c) if so, the steps Government propose to take to ensure that all slaughter houses operate in hygienic conditions with permission from boards?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI NAMO NARAIN MEENA): (a) to (c) The information is being collected and will be laid on the Table of the HoUse.

Pakistan's nuclear programme

1847. SHRI AMAR SINGH:
SHRI ABU ASIM AZMI:

Will the Minister.of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government is aware that every successive American Government from President Jimmy Carter to incumbent President George W. Bush has turned a blind eye to Pakistan's nuclear programme and allowed Islamabad to build nuclear facilthes in Kahute; and

(b) if so, the Government's reaction thereto?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNALAFFAIRS (SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE): (a) and (b) Government are aware that the problem of clandestine acquisition of nuclear weapons technologies by Pakistan has continued-since the 1970s. Despite decliiraltions of restraint and the existence of export control regimes and restrictions by suppliers, Pakistan's proliferation has continued. India has consistently shared its concerns regarding the adverse effects of such developments on India's security with the international community, including the USA- Government carefully monitor all such developments which have a bearing on our security and are committed to taking all necessary steps to safeguard national security.

Introduction of e-passport system

1848. DR. V. MAITREYAN: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) the steps that are being taken to introduce the expassport system in the country;

(b) if so, by when it is likely to be implemented;

(c) whether Government has formulated any policy to identify the persons with multiple passports and fake passports in the country; and

(d) the steps that are being taken to improve the working of various passport offices in the country and to provide passports within a short period from the date of submission of documents?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNALAFFAIRS (SHRI E. AHAMMED): (a) and (b) Yes. The Government has decided to introduce e-passports, also known as bio-metric passports, initially for diplomats and officials as a pilot project by the middle of 2008. Based on the experience gained from this pilot project, it is proposed to start issuance of e-passports in the ordinary category.

(c) Yes. Incorporation of bio-metrics in the passports will make them more secure against forgeries and will also further strengthen prevention of issue of multiple passports.

(d) The Government had entrusted the National Institute of Smart Government (NISG), Hyderabad, with the task of undertaking a time-bound study on the passport issuance system, including its IT aspects with the objective to deliver passport related services to the citizens in a timely, transparent, more accessible, reliable manner. NISG has submitted its report which has been accepted by the Government and it has been decided to launch "Passport Seva Project". The project is expected to result in the issue of passports within 3 days and in cases which require police verification, within 3 days after the completion of the verification process. Tatkal passports are expected to be issued the same day.

Tourists applying for Indian visas

1849: SHRI NARESH GUJRAL: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that tourists applying for Indian visas in France have to start living up outside the Embassy at 6.00 AM and despite the severe chill there is no arrangement to accommodate them inside the chancery; and

(b) the steps that are being taken to expedite issue of visas and not treat the consular services only as a profit centre?